u Bowen C-4 (1945-1967) 195. MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

their graves, and justly, too, for diving probably hastened their end. The Government demands that account books be given each diver and that they be kept up properly, and sends inspectors to see that they are. Before the season begins at Bahrein the amount of cash advances is agreed upon and proclaimed. The divers have put up a terrific objection to this limitation, for it seemed to them that they were simply getting less money. They could not understand that their debt was being lowered—in fact they did not care, for hadn't they always been in debt?

There is a "diving court" which enforces the arbitrary laws of the industry, such as those dealing with engagement of labor, taxes, spurious pearls, etc. The court also disposes of any case of a *nakhoda* who cannot pay off his debts; the *nakhoda* may lose his boat and divers, but not his personal property.

There has never been any noticeable effort on the part of the ruling sheikhs to better the lot of their subjects: if they were unemployed for long periods in the winter they would be sure to work harder during the pearling season to pay off their winter's debts. As the local sheikhs levy a tax on every boat and get a cut of some sort on the proceeds, the pearlers in a sense work for them. The sheikh thus always looked on the lack of other employment with favor, for if a man were happily employed as a farmer, fisherman, or herder there would be little incentive to enter the pearling purgatory. Under normal conditions the divers have an eight months' loaf during which time they live off their *nakhoda;* this is to the liking of both the diver and the *nakhoda.*

However, many divers do find other work, as fishermen or mariners. The depression of the thirties hit the Persian Gulf pearl industry with great suddenness. Within a short period tens of thousands of pearlers in the Gulf found themselves without an occupation. The marine stock of Kuwait rose to the situation and gradually shifted to cargo hauling between Kuwait and Basra, Iran, India, South Arabia, and East Africa. Large ocean-going double-ended dhows have carried the fame of Kuwait seamanship throughout the Middle East, sailing to Africa on one monsoon and back on another. Kuwait oil operations have been drawing on this labor supply as well, so that nowadays the

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI 1

building and trading port of the Persian Gulf, though offering little trade itself. Its only real rival in the deep-sea trade was the ancient port of Sur, near Ras al-Hadd, on the Gulf of Oman. Figures for the port of Sur were unobtainable, but there must have been at least 100 deep-sea dhows sailing from there, the majority to Mogadishu, Mombasa, and Zanzibar. Several ports on the Trucial Coast of Oman also sent their quota of deep-sea ships to Africa and India; and Muscat and Mutrah Bay, and the ports of Lingeh and Qishm, in Iran, contributed a few. But the flag of Iran was a rarity in both Indian and African ports, compared with the Arab.

In addition to the Persian Gulf and Omani ports, Mukalla in the Hadhramaut, Ma'alla by Aden, Hodeida, Mocha, and Luhaiya in the Yemen, and Qizan on the coast of Asir in the Red Sea, all build and maintain considerable fleets of dhows. These I have seen, personally; there are many ports I was unable to visit. It is probable that the dhow trade round the Arab coasts employs upwards of 2,000 vessels of one sort or another, in which at least thirty or forty thousand men gain some sort of livelihood.

For many years, steamers of the British India Company have been trading in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait is still well served by steamers from Karachi, and an occasional long-voyage vessel used to put in from New York and London, even before the oil resources began to be exploited in 1940. American, German, Italian, and British lines, none of them likely to overlook any cargoes, all traded to the Gulf. The African East Coast and the Indian coasts are even better served. How is it, then, that a dhow trade of such importance still survives? How is it organized, and how managed?

One reason — perhaps the chief — why the ancient trade with the monsoons down the Indian Ocean not only survives but flourishes is that the dhows warehouse the goods they carry as well as transport them, and it suits the merchants better to have 10,000 packages of new-season's dates divided among a fleet of dhows, than in the hold of one steamer which will unload the lot in a day or two, and flood the market. Ten thousand packages provide cargoes for at least five large dhows; the dhow master does not care how long he takes to discharge his cargo, for his overheads are trifling, his crew works on shares and handles all cargo, and

his vessel pays practically no port dues. His dates can therefore be warehoused in the dhow, until the market can easily absorb them.

The dhow trade is "native" trade, a stubborn plant which has been growing a long, long time. Nearly all the cargoes carried in dhows are for the native bazaars, and almost never for European account. Much of the cargoes consists of goods which the dhow captain himself, or some merchant or merchants travelling with him, sells for his own profit. The dhow is a peddler, as well as a carrier; a storehouse, as well as a ship; a means of livelihood to travelling merchants, as well as to her crew proper. Basra dates, though the most important outward cargo,[1] are only one source of revenue: there are a host of others, not necessarily always legitimate.

Kuwaiti owners of date plantations on the nearby Basra river play a considerable part in the financing of deep-sea dhows, though in most cases the captains, called *nakhodas*, are at least the nominal owners. It suits the merchants well that the *nakhodas* should regard themselves as the owners, for this provides them with a cheap form of insurance. If the dhow be lost it is the *nakhoda's* loss, and not the merchant's, for the poor captain must pay back not only the value of the dhow but the advance of freight given him to finance his voyage. Since Islam forbids all forms of ordinary insurance, this arrangement is to the merchant's liking. The *nakhodas* must accept it, for in most cases there is no other way by which they can acquire a big dhow.

In Kuwait, immediately prior to the outbreak of World War II, there was beginning to be some restiveness about this, and an association of the *nakhodas* had the temerity to issue its demands upon the merchants. These included payment of demurrage when unduly delayed at the loading berths in Basra (a dhow might be kept for weeks waiting for her cargo), a sliding scale of freights for different ports instead of the customary flat rate of 1.5 or 2 rupees a package regardless of destination, liability for the return of advances to cease with the loss of the ship, two competent officers for every seagoing dhow, and so forth. The demands represente

[1] Crew requirements and the very measurements of the dhows themselves are reckoned in terms of dates. A sailor to each 100 packages is the general rule, in Kuwait, and a dhow is spoken of there as having a capacity for 2,000 packages of dates, rather than as being of 100 tons burden.

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a bare minimun, surely, and no more than a nakhoda's right, but the merchants' answer was that if the nakhodas could make new rules, so also could they; and they had the real power. I do not think the attempt of the nakhodas got them very far.

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While the dates are generally carried both to India and East Africa on a freight basis, nearly all other cargo is bought to the ship's own account and peddled to best advantage. The merchants have a substantial share in the dhow's earnings, apart from the sailor's own ventures, which are limited to what they can stow in a sea chest on the poop. As far as I was able to discover -- and I was more than twelve months sailing in deep-sea dhows -- the freight from the dates, on the typical African voyage, is used to finance a cargo of salt from Aden and to purchase odds and ends which might earn a profit in the bazaars of the Benadir coast and Kenya Colony. At the same time, the dhow carries all the passengers she can prevail upon to make a voyage, anywhere, for the Arab of Oman, and the Hadhramaut in particular, is an inveterate wanderer, and every dhow is a passenger vessel by the mere possession of deck enough to lie upon.

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The salt is sold in the best market that offers between the Hadhramaut coast and Zanzibar. At the same time, the nakhoda does what trading he can in anything which he knows, from past experience, will command a market. The average dhow never leaves the Gulf without at least some carpets, allegedly Persian but generally of either Italian or English origin, which are used both as trade and as bribes. Cooking stones, ghee, live sheep, cows, sacks of rice and flour, dried fish, haberdashery of all sorts, brassware, cheap enamelware, Arab confectionery -- all these may be aboard, either as ship's ventures or as the crew's, generally the latter.

Every man of the crew concentrates on goods which can be bought cheaply in the free port of Aden, adulterated if possible in transit, and sold to the Somali or Swahili shopkeepers whose little stores abound in every port along the coast of East Africa, from Haifun in the north (which the Italians called Dante) to Mikindani in the south, which is about as far south as the Arabs sail in these days. Only Indian dhows go further, to Madagascar and the Comorin Islands. Gaily coloured turbans of the correct style

S. Villiers · T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

443 505 439 (for the manner of headdress worn in the different parts of Arabia and East Africa varies considerably; what will sell well at Mukalla, for instance, will find no buyers at Kuwait; and the Arab is a stickler for style), sarongs from Java and Japan, amber and artificial beads of the kind the true Moslem loves to fondle, cigarettes in gay packages but of no advertised brand, cheap perfumes (which I have several times seen the sailors laboriously adulterating with water from the ship's tanks), small crocheted caps to go under turbans, money belts, caps of artificial leather and pullovers of extremely artificial wool, veils for the harem, basketware from the Hadhramaut, sometimes a little hashish or *qat*[1] — these are the sailors' ventures, and the profits are their own.

The sailors are inveterate smugglers; almost none of the goods they bring — apart from the main cargo — is declared. Since they leave from small ports along the coast of Arabia where official supervision, while thorough, is not organized to conform with the Europeans' idea of how trade should be conducted, and since so much of their more highly dutiable goods are private ventures, such manifests as they produce to the authorities are useless. The mariner buys his goods himself, and sells them himself (though he does not mind disposing of them to boats alongside). He sees no point in accepting any official interference, and to him the European on the East African coast is still an interloper, recently arrived and wholly unnecessary.

505 484 486 The passenger trade is an important one, particularly in the East African voyaging. Though the Italians in their colonies tried to regulate the movement of Arabs, and the growth of Indian influence in Mombasa and Zanzibar has much lessened Arab trade and opportunities, still thousands of Omani and Hadhramaut Arabs travel down the Benadir coast and to Zanzibar annually. Every dhow fit to go to sea — and quite a few which look as if they are not — carries her quota, and some of the overcrowding is incredible. Among 35 Arab dhows which were lying together at Mogadishu, in Italian Somaliland, in the season of 1939, the Italian immigration authorities checked 4,000 passengers. They

[1] A bush common to southern Arabia, especially the Yemen. The leaves, when chewed, are somewhat intoxicating.

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Kuwait MI 1

missed at least another 600, for no list which the dhows supply is really reliable, and each ship carries many persons who are without European documents. As a new dhow arrives, sometimes dozens of her passengers will drop quietly over the side and disperse themselves among the dhows already in the harbour. As with the disposal of the seamen's ventures, all Arabs take a delight, regardless of their ports of origin, in the general defeat of European regulations.

II

At first glance, the whole deep-sea trade in dhows seems unorganized and almost unregulated. In point of fact, it is very well organized indeed, and has a tradition going back, probably, some thousands of years. There is no association of dhow owners in Arabia as there is a Country Craft Organization on the west coast of India, for the Arab of today is too inherently disunited and fiercely individualist to make this type of co-operation possible. But he can organize his own trade very well, nevertheless. The typical wealthy business family of Kuwait maintains offices, almost always managed by sons of the house who frequently rotate on the circuit, in all the more important centers of Arab coastal trade. The head office is at Kuwait or perhaps Basra, with branches at Aden (in the Crater, not at Steamer Point), Bombay, possibly one other west coast of India port, and Mukalla. Where there is not an actual branch of the family conducting business on a permanent footing, there is either a trusted agent (probably a relative), or one of the younger sons sent in the trading season to watch the family interests. This, for instance, is done at Berbera, in British Somaliland, which, when times are good, can absorb a surprising quantity of Iraqi dates carried there in dhows. The agent or family member is primarily responsible for the collection of debts — always a problem in a trade which is carried on without banking. A family carrying on business on such a scale will have a finger in perhaps a score big dhows, all nominally "owned" by their own *nakhodas*. The cash resources of some of these families must be enormous, and behind them stands the Sheikh of Kuwait, who was a wealthy man even before oil was discovered in his territory.

2. Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

MA 471 426 568 When a deep-sea dhow is built, at least some of the money is put up by the *nakhoda* himself and his family. It is the first essential of the *nakhoda* that he should be from a family of standing in the community, which will pay its debts. Just why such families cannot finance a dhow by themselves I was unable to discover, but the Arab, apparently, has no objection to carrying on business under a cumbersome structure of debt. The merchant, backed by the Sheikh or the ruling family, backs the *nakhoda's* family, who support in turn a trusted and experienced member to take command of the dhow.

MA 565 871 857 It is customary for the boys in such families to go to sea while very young, but they never work as sailors. They are always privileged: no sailor can become a deep-sea *nakhoda*, since obviously if his family is of standing, he would never serve before the mast. The children sail with him sometimes from the age of six or seven, though not regularly. They will make one or two long voyages, looking on and learning but not actually doing anything; then they will remain at home a year or two before going out again. They take command very young. Schooling, at least in 1939, was normally restricted to the local Koranic schools, and rarely occupied more than three months in the year. Only merchants' sons went to the colleges of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria.

MA 565 554 505 Gradually the head of a *nakhoda's* family may attain the status of a lesser merchant himself, though his merchandise is generally limited to the wherewithal to build ships, which comes up in his own dhows from the Malabar coast. But a *nakhoda* himself almost never becomes a merchant, and a merchant's son never becomes a *nakhoda*. Nevertheless, the profession of conducting deep-sea dhows about the waters of the Indian Ocean is a highly respected one, and the shipmasters of Kuwait are, on the whole, a very competent and knowledgeable class, though few of them can practice much astronomical navigation. Even their long voyages down to Zanzibar or to Calicut are coasting, really down with one monsoon, and back with the other, almost always in sight of land. Their real ability consists in their local knowledge, both of ports and trade.

MA 505 565 In Kuwait, in 1939 — as now — there were upwards of 10,000 qualified deep-sea sailors. An astonishingly high proportion is of

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

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Negro origin, the descendants of slaves, though not now slaves themselves. Many others are of Iranian origin. Almost none are Bedouin, for the Arab Bedouin is not a seafaring man. In Kuwait, the callings open to the low-class Iranian are restricted to portering, pearling (either as diver or as tender), and sailing. Both Iranians and Negroes work splendidly, are loyal, competent, and well disciplined.

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As the *nakhoda* class is tied to the merchant by a structure of debt, so also are the sailors tied to the *nakhoda* class in the same way. All deep-sea sailing is paid for on a shares system, and there are no wages. Often the *nakhoda* of the deep-sea dhow has an interest in a pearling vessel (though not now to anything like the same extent as in former years), and the sailor may be bound to him through pearling debts, either his own or inherited. The more iniquitous practices in the pearling business structure have long been on the way out, largely because of the excellent example set at Bahrein, but the debt tradition stands and is almost impossible to eradicate.

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The sailors go to sea because they know no other life, and they make a wretched living by incredibly difficult methods. They have no possessions other than the clothes they stand in, and one or two spare gowns, a good headcloth, and a few sarongs. Their toothbrush is the twig of a tree; their ablutions are made five times daily at a mosque well, or in the sea; they know no shelter and rarely have a bed. The younger seamen, I have noticed, often have no home other than the *suq*, or native bazaar, where they coil down in their rough cloaks for a night's sleep on a bench in a cheap coffee shop, or in the sand. At sea, they stretch out on the deck, beneath the stars, for there is no such thing as accommodation for the seamen or anyone else in most dhows. The officers and the more important merchants live on a bench round the wheel, in the stern of the ship; the seamen lie down anywhere.

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What keeps the seaman a disciplined and more or less contented worker is his hope of reward, principally from smuggling or his own ventures, and his ambition to get hold of a tiny shop in the *suq* of his home town. This is an ambition he rarely achieves. His more usual fate is to die young, especially if he be also a pearl diver.

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
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000 K MA 228 also a pearl diver. Pearling from Kuwait and Bahrein is carried on during the season of the hard southwest monsoon in the Indian Ocean, when the big dhows are laid up and there is no ocean sailing. It is therefore possible for the same men to carry on both callings, though in these days the seaman is becoming a little too enlightened to go off cheerfully to the purgatory of pearling.

MA 565 581 595 The seaman is also helped by his religion, by his interest in the seafaring life (which has a great appeal of its own) and the fine camaraderie about it, and in many cases by the delights of night life in such ports as Zanzibar and Bombay. If he has no harem of his own back in Kuwait, he is certainly no celibate at Zanzibar. He generally seems to manage a small home in Kuwait after a few voyages, depending upon his own business acumen and the general success of the dhow he serves in. Many *nakhodas* appear to maintain several.

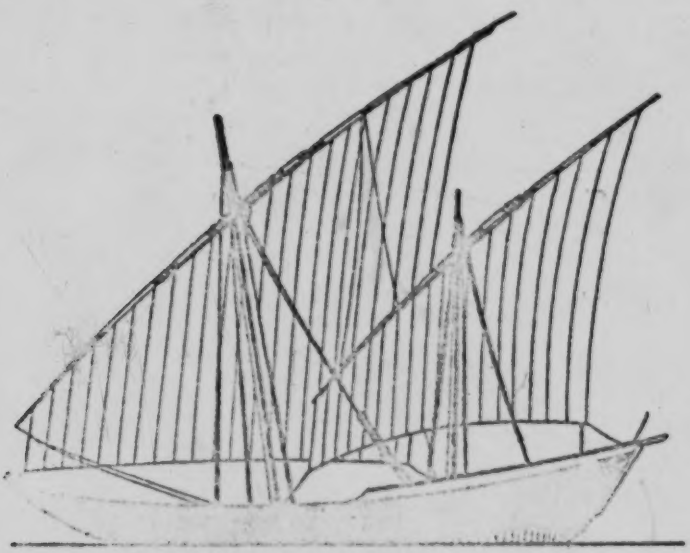
MA 505 565 In addition to the merchants, *nakhodas*, and seamen, there is another class of importance in the dhow trade. These are the mates, the experienced officers who, never able to become *nakhodas* themselves because of an unacceptable financial status, very often have more to do with the actual sailing of the dhow than the *nakhoda*. Each big dhow carries at least one such experienced man. Sometimes he is of Iranian origin, and has been sailing since he could walk. Sometimes he is a Negro, member of a trusted ex-slave family, who lives with the *nakhoda* at home or has been brought up in his courtyard.

MA 505 565 439 He is always an able mariner, but he is not often trusted to trade. It is not at all uncommon for a *nakhoda*, on the usual East African voyage — which always begins with a long haul and long-winded peddling of dates round the coasts of Southern Arabia, and to Berbera and perhaps Djibouti — to leave the ship for considerable portions of the passage at sea, while he looks after her business interests ashore. For example, in one Kuwait dhow in which I had the good fortune to sail for some eight months, the *nakhoda* cheerfully left the ship at Aden and went on to Mukalla by steamer, to steal a march on the other shipmasters and scoop the cream — he hoped — from the passenger market. Again, he left the ship at Zanzibar, and his mate took her down to the delta of the Rufiji, hauled her out on the beach at Kwale Island south

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arab MK2

of Dar es Salaam, loaded her with mangrove poles, and brought her back to Zanzibar again, where the *nakhoda* had ostensibly been trying to assemble passengers and extra cargo for the return to Arabia but in fact had been enjoying a new harem.

Mates are paid by shares, and are, in my opinion, an oppressed class. They carry their own ventures, engage in smuggling on a



Baggala

small scale — haberdashery, currency, and so forth — and generally keep the ship's books. They may become *nakhodas* of small *booms*, running to the Basra river; but it is unusual for a man from the more dignified deep-sea trades to descend to this. There is no social status about the *nakhoda* of a coastwise water dhow.

Ships are built by shipwrights who employ no naval architects. Both builders and riggers' lofts are unknown. The ships are put together entirely by eye and take the traditional form either of the double-ended *boom*, or the carved and embellished *baggala*, which obviously has a considerable ancestry from the Portuguese

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

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galleon. *Baggalas*, being both costly to build and unwieldy in a seaway, are now unfashionable. A *boom* is both cheaper and much easier to build, and carries just as much. Her sharp stern makes her safer in a seaway, though it is no part of her builder's plan that her *nakhodas* will try her qualities in a storm. Their sailing, he hopes, will be confined to sunny seas and more or less favorable winds; therefore the clumsy lateen rig will do.

K MA 501 505

The lateen is awkward but cheap; it demands a big crew, but these are cheap, too, for they are the sailmakers and riggers as well as mariners, and their only cost is an agreed share in the ship's earnings. The lateen is a grand pulling sail, and the dhows sail handsomely in their own conditions. There is nothing clumsy about them, though their fish-oiled hulls smell abominably and their underwater bodies are preserved by a mixture of tallow and lime, rubbed on by hand and renewed quarterly. The sailors do this work, as well as handle all the cargoes, keep the passengers in order and extol the merits of their ship so that more passengers might sail with her, tow the ship with her own longboat and propel the smaller dhows by sweeps, in calms, and fight for her if need be. The Kuwait dhows today are never armed, though the Suri may be.

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III

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A brief description of my personal experiences will serve to illustrate a typical East African voyage.[1] I sailed in a Kuwait dhow of the *boom* type, a vessel of 2,000 date-packages capacity — perhaps 150 tons — which had a crew of twenty-eight. She carried something between 120 and 180 passengers, although her hold was full of salt and rice, and her decks were already crowded with a large longboat, a small gig, and a dhow under construction for sale at Lamu.

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I joined the vessel at Ma'alla, the native port of Aden. She had already been several months at sea, peddling a full cargo of dates from Fao (by the mouth of the Basra river) around the coast of the Hadhramaut, and to Berbera. When I joined her, she had been hauled out on the beach at Ma'alla and her bottom

K MA 113

[1] The voyage here summarized is described in detail in the author's *Sons of Sinbad* (New York, 1940).

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1

K MA 505 437 [396]

repayed, and already was loaded with her cargo of salt and rice in sacks, and some mysterious parcels on deck for the Sultan of Mukalla. All her crew had their sea chests filled with trade goods from the cheap *suq* in the Crater at Aden; her carpenter was at work on a 40-foot dhow for sale on the voyage; and she had shipped several Suri and Omani merchants, from Aden, bound on a general trading voyage on their own account, wherever the dhow might take them.

K MA 484 439 505

We sailed first to Mukalla and Shihr, where we embarked passengers (the fare was eight rupees regardless of destination, the passengers providing their own food and looking after themselves entirely) and some further cargo. This consisted mainly of a parcel of condemned dates which it was hoped to sell to the Somali (or failing that, to feed to the Swahili labor in the Rufiji Delta, when loading mangrove poles), some dried shark which smelled high even aboard the dhow, some cooking stones, and a considerable quantity of basketware.

With this lot aboard, and the *nakhoda* pessimistic and depressed at the small number of passengers, though his dhow appeared crowded, we sailed first to Haifun, a salt port on the northeastern coast of Italian Somaliland. There we anchored among a fleet of dhows, and did nothing at all for some time. Finally, some rice was sold, some haberdashery smuggled into boats which the local Somali brought alongside, and lot of fish caught and dried. Then we went on to Mogadishu, running down the coast with the northeast monsoon. At Haifun another Kuwait ship was caught smuggling and heavily fined; and all the Kuwaiti in the harbour contributed to pay the fine. At Mogadishu, it was hoped to land a hundred or so passengers, but the Italians would not permit them to disembark. Trade there was extremely difficult, and little could be done. Some of the merchants left, as far as I could gather, to try to collect debts owing to them from previous voyages. Some smuggling went on (I saw a lovely carpet change hands), some of our passengers melted away and their places were taken by others, equally undocumented.

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After a week or ten days we passed on down the coast to Lamu. Here more passengers landed and there was a determined attempt to sell the new dhow which the carpenter had completed. She

K was a lovely little vessel which could carry some fifteen tons. The
MA price asked was 1,000 East African shillings, or about $240. At that price,
501 there was no buyer; she finally changed hands at 700 shillings. Lamu was
439 a mangrove-pole port, but I gathered the trade was rather too well re-
435 gulated for our nakhoda's taste, and we bought nothing.

K Next came Mombasa, a port with a large dhow trade. Some figures I
MA saw in the Report of the General Manager on the Administration of the
439 Railways and Harbours (Kenya and Uganda) showed that the dhow trade
505 was increasing, rather than diminishing. The latest returns I say, for
the year ended December 31, 1937, showed that 1,427 dhows had
arrived at Mombasa, an increase of ten percent on the previous year.
These 1,427 dhows were computed to register -- if they had been re-
gistered -- nearly 40,000 tons. Many were Swahili, from Lamu and
Zanzibar, but a large proportion was Arab. There was a native harbor
set aside for them, and here we sold salt, landing it in our own longboat.
K We got rid of our surviving passengers, gave feasts to merchants and
MA officials of the native harbor (these were a great feature of the voyage,
[574] and were always accompanied by much monotonous singing and dancing),
gathered tidings from brother nakhodas from Kuwait and Sur about trade
prospects further south, collected debts, and finally departed toward
Zanzibar.

K There were three Indian and one Iranian deep-sea dhows in the port at
MA Mombasa. The Iranian was an enormous vessel of over 400 tons -- the
501 largest dhow I saw anywhere. She was a boom and had been built at
396 Kuwait, but the Kuwaiti sold her because they found such large vessels
439 uneconomic, in bad times, for the mere reason of their two great
capacity. They brought too much to sell, when the market was depressed,
and they could not wait indenfinitely to dispose of their cargoes because
their overhead was too high, despite the fact that everything possible
was done to keep down building costs, even to the sending of Kuwaiti
shipwrights to the Malabar coast to build big vessels there, rather than
carry the timber to Kuwait.

K Zanzibar, at that season of the year, was an even busier Arab
MA port than Mombasa. In the first month of the northeast season,
439 over a hundred ocean-going dhows had arrived at Zanzibar, most

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MI1
Zanzibar FM1

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of them Arab. I noticed in the registry office of the Customs building that some were entered as Somali, and a few were registered in the Hadhramaut. No longer did they bring down picturesque cargoes of myrrh and frankincense (if they ever did) or ship out slaves and ivory, ambergris and hippopotamus teeth. They brought salt and dried fish; and when they came, the quantities of hashish and other drugs in the town showed a significant increase. They loaded little at Zanzibar for the homeward voyage, but went on down to the coast of Tanganyika.

We completed the discharge of our outward goods at Zanzibar, and the crew busied itself for weeks selling Hadhramaut basketware and Aden haberdashery — port of origin, Yokohama. When we sailed, leaving our *nakhoda* behind, our only cargo was the parcel of condemned dates, which the Somali would not have. We passed on down to the delta of the Rufiji River, a place given up to mosquitoes, malignant malaria fever, monkeys, sad Swahili, rain, and the best mangrove poles in the world. Here we lay six weeks, while a cargo of some 142 score of poles was laboriously cut and loaded. For this work, Swahili were engaged to help our crew, and at last the bad dates found consumers. The mangrove poles were ferried out in the dhow's longboat, and paid for in silver shillings to a white supervisor. There were some twenty dhows loading in the Rufiji delta at the time, all for the Persian Gulf.

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It struck me as strange that the dhow should spend so much time embarking a cargo in which the total investment was less than $500, for no matter how I tried to figure things out, I did not see how it could possibly be worth her while to haul such a paltry cargo so long a distance, or how she could make enough from it to show a reasonable profit on the voyage. There was certainly something mysterious about this mangrove pole business, and the white supervisor, energetic as he was, by no means knew all that went on. I noticed later, when we sold our cargo to King Ibn Saud's agents at Bahrein for use in a new palace at Riyadh, that the Arab receipt was for 295 score, and the price paid, over 4,000 rupees, approximated $1,200.

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There was some attempt in Zanzibar to regulate the dhow traffic, and precautions were taken to see that there was no slaving, under any guise. A local act requires that evidence be shown

2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
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Zanzibar FM1

that any new crew members in Arab ships joined voluntarily; vessels must not be overmanned, and crew and passenger lists must be provided and in order; ships must be surveyed, and kept seaworthy; and *nakhodas* must be certificated. As for the last, the port officials conduct examinations, and the general principle seems to be that if a man is capable enough to bring a dhow down to Zanzibar, certificate or no certificate, he can also be trusted to sail her away again. But the fee for examination is fifteen shillings, and the Arabs complain about it.

We touched at Zanzibar again after loading in the Rufiji, re-embarked our *nakhoda* and took aboard a few Swahili school-teachers as passengers (they proposed to hire an automobile at Kuwait to take them to Mecca), filled the decks with coconuts and cases of soap and vermicelli, and departed toward the Persian Gulf again with the first of the broken weather at the end of the northeast season. We did not await the coming of the true south-west monsoons, for it sets in hard; we sailed direct to Muscat, in twenty-six days.

Muscat was depressed and there was no trade there, not even smuggling. All that changed hands, as far as I could see, was a box of Maria Theresa thalers, enormous Austrian coins minted in London for the Omani and available in Zanzibar at a price less than the exchange rate in Muscat. The Arabs turned everything to profit and were prepared to sell anything, even the ship. The sailors' pastime in the Rufiji was buying lemons — a thousand for a shilling — and converting them into sherbet, which they hawked in the *suq* at Kuwait throughout the summer.

Our cargo of mangrove poles sold at Bahrein, the ship returned to Kuwait, to lay up inside a coral breakwater until the new season's Iraqi dates ripened and it was time to go out again. At Kuwait, when all her people were returned — several relations of the *nakhoda* had dispersed from Zanzibar back to Lamu and Mogadishu to collect debts — a general balance sheet of the whole round voyage was struck, the profits computed carefully, and divided by a system of shares arranged traditionally. It was not a straightforward statement of income and expenditure; I never saw or heard of any piece of Arab seafaring business which was as simple as that. It was all complicated by prior advances,

2: Villiers T-8 (1938-39) 1948 MK: Maritime Arabs MK2
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debts, odd earnings not shared and even odder earnings which were shared, and mysterious complicated procedures, some of which I never did fathom, for the war came, and stopped my investigations.

The son of the merchant family which owned our dhow, however, told me that her gross profit on the nine-month round voyage was 11,000 rupees, not including the proceeds of the crews' and officers' private ventures. But I think he exaggerated, for the total investment in the dhow was little more than that. But at any rate, the dhow's people were well satisfied and they all, save one, went back to sea with her. The *nakhoda* grew fat throughout the summer, and took a new wife, and a new *boom* for his brother at a cost of 10,500 rupees; and I heard no complaints from the merchants.

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As far as I was able to discover, half the gross earnings went to the ship; this was the merchant's share. The cost of the food for the round voyage (which was not much, for all hands lived very simply and fishing lines were the most important equipment in what passed for her storeroom) was deducted from the other half, and the remainder was then divided by shares arranged strictly in accordance with the accepted value of each man's rating aboard. The sailor's share on the voyage which I made was reported to be 135 rupees (about $40), whereof 35 rupees had been advanced. This was little enough for such a long voyage, and though they worked hard at all sorts of things and were ready for any kind of business, I doubt whether a sailor's earnings from other sources amounted to more than 20 or 30 rupees, clear.

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I heard of dhows from Kuwait that season which were distributing less than 100 rupees; according to the Kuwaiti, who had no high opinion of them, the Suri rarely paid out more than fifty. To a sailor whose only home was the sand of the *suq* and his bed the cloak around him, whose wants were few and whose paradise was assured, even 50 rupees may be a vast sum of money. There was, at any rate, contentment throughout the Arab shipping industry as I knew it, and the quiet philosophy I learned among the simple seamen was of great help to me in the days of the long-drawn war which was soon to follow.

228 361 505 However, a century before this, Kuwait was apparently noted more for its pearl fisheries (which are still important) than for its maritime trade, as Niebuhr related that in 1763

> Kuwait is a sea-port town. . . . The inhabitants live by the fishery of pearls and of fishes. They are said to employ in this species of naval industry more than 800 boats. In the favorable season of the year, this town is left almost desolate, everybody going out either to the fishing, or upon some trading adventure.[6]

In Niebuhr's time, in the eighteenth century, the Omani sailors from Muscat and Sur on the Gulf of Oman were the famed Arab mariners, for Niebuhr related that

> The inhabitants of Oman, although not fond of sea-fights, are nevertheless the best mariners in all Arabia. They have several good harbours, and employ many small vessels in the navigation between Jidda and Basra. To this last town there come annually fifty such vessels.[7]

In the middle of the last century Muscat was still an important maritime port, for in 1854 Osgood related that

> Several ports in the Persian Gulf are tributary to it, and some excellent ships and a large number of [*baghlas*] employed in coasting and foreign trade, are owned by the Banian merchants at Muscat. In fact more than half of the trade of the Persian Gulf is carried on in ships owned at Muscat. . . . The trade with America, which is carried on chiefly by vessels from Salem does not exceed thirty-five or forty thousand dollars annually. Dates and cash are usually taken in exchange for American merchandize.[8]

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In the present day Muscat has completely fallen from its former prized position and given way to Kuwait and Bahrein Island in the Persian Gulf. However, the port of Sur in Oman still carries on the maritime tradition of the Omanis and maintains a considerable fleet of dhows which have long been prominent in the trading along the African coast.

501 The craft that make the trip down the African coast from Arabia are by no means all large ocean-going vessels; craft of all sizes and descriptions come into Zanzibar. Villiers[9] tells of seeing a 30-foot *jalbhut* from Oman sailing down the African coast. Having owned and sailed a *jalbhut* of about the same size in the relatively calm Persian Gulf waters, I have nothing but the utmost respect for anyone with the nerve to sail such a small open boat several thousand miles in the potentially rougher Indian Ocean.

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[6] C. Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia* (Edinburgh: R. Morison and Son, 1792), II, 127.
[7] Ibid., 122.
[8] Osgood, *Notes of Travel* (Salem, 1854), p. 81.
[9] A. Villiers, *55*, p. 190.

4: Bowen C-8 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

Estimate of the size of the dhow fleet sailing down the African coast is difficult, as the Arab goes to extremes to evade official statistics. The Mombasa port statistics for 1937 showed 1,427 dhows entering the port.[10] Not all the ships sailing to Zanzibar put into Mombasa, which is only a day's sail from Zanzibar. It must also be remembered that a certain percentage of the figure represents Mombasa dhows and dhows of neighboring ports on local coastal trading ventures. In Aden some two thousand dhows trade in and out of the port every year. However, a large proportion of this figure represents Adenese dhows and neighboring dhows that do most of the cargo carrying to the small ports in the southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden; only a small percentage of this figure represents dhows passing through Aden on their way to Africa. Thus it would seem that the total number of craft sailing down the East African coast may well range over a thousand, depending upon economic conditions. Only a small portion of these are Indian craft, for Vaidya[11] estimates that about seventy-five Indian vessels of from one hundred to two hundred tons are engaged in the traffic to Africa, mostly from the Gulf of Cutch.

The Indian Ocean dhow trade is definitely a seasonal venture, as the ships usually depend on the monsoons to carry them on fair winds to their destinations. Vessels from the Persian Gulf and from India make one round trip a season when traveling south to East Africa. Arab and Persian ships start leaving the Persian Gulf in August and September with the first date crops and return in May and June, averaging eight to ten months for the round trip. Indian ships making the Africa run leave in November and return by June, averaging about six months for the round trip. The Indians have less time in which to make the trip because of the violent storms on the west coast of India during the southwest monsoon, which makes sailing unwise during the months of June, July, August, and September.

When making the trip between the Persian Gulf and India it is customary for the Arabs, Persians, and Indians to make two round trips a season. The vessels leave at the same time as the ships going to Africa; that is, in August and September for Persian Gulf ships, and in November for Indian ships. Because of the monsoon storms, the Indians have to be home by June, while the Arabs only have to be out of Indian waters by June. Actually, Arab ships start arriving in November and are ready to leave India after their second trip in March or April. These trips be-

[10] A. Villiers, 'The Arab Dhow Trade,' *Middle East Journal*, II (1948), 413.

[11] K. B. Vaidya, *Sailing Vessel Traffic on the West Coast of India* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1945), p. 57. I am indebted to Mr. Alexander Crosby Brown for calling this most valuable work to my attention.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

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tween the Gulf and India usually average about three months a round trip.

The effect of the southwest monsoon in India is felt most in the southern part of India. In April the northeast winds change gradually to the southwest; the monsoon breaks in force on Ceylon in the third week in May and moves up the coast, hitting Bombay about the first week in June, and finally reaching Karachi about the last of June.

Along the Malabar coast it is not unusual for 150 inches of rain to fall in four months from May into September. However, farther north on the Sind coast there is only about twenty-five inches of rain during the whole southwest monsoon. Thus on the Malabar coast there is no coastal trade carried on from May through September. During a storm in May 1943 over two hundred vessels were sunk on the Malabar coast and more wrecked.[12] However, on the northern Sind coast of India native shipping is closed down only during June and July, so that there is a ten-month shipping season possible there, as compared to seven months on the Malabar coast. The west coast of India gets about a month more of the southwest monsoon than the western part of the Indian Ocean, where the northeast winds start about October. The northeast monsoon usually brings fair weather with little rain to the west coast of India. Away from the coast of India the southwest monsoon is a fair weather trade wind blowing up from Africa.

There are numerous Indian firms that will insure cargoes carried on Indian coastal sailing craft; the insurance rates give a vivid picture of the relative danger at sea during the various periods of the two monsoons:[13]

Season	*Month*	*Rate*
Change	November	1½%
Northeast Monsoon	December-January	1%
	February	1¼%
	March	1½-1¾%
Change	April	2½-6%
Southwest Monsoon	May	6-20%
	June-July-August	No insurance
	September	2½%
	October	1½%

This shows very graphically why Arab ships stay out of southern Indian

[12] Ibid., p. 16.

[13] Ibid., p. 136. These rates are average rates for the southern part of the coast, and of course would change for the northern part of the coast where the southwest monsoon does not set in until June.

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waters from May to September, and why most local Indian craft are drawn up on the beaches.

II

Dates are probably as important a factor as the monsoons in maintaining the large lateen fleet in the waters of the Indian Ocean. By a lucky coincidence, the great date crop of Iraq begins to ripen just before the northeast monsoon sets in about October. The great maritime expansion of the port of Kuwait has probably been due in no small part to its proximity to Basra, the port through which most of Iraq's dates go.

Dhows come to Basra for dates from Kuwait, Bahrein, Persia, Oman, India, and even as far away as the Hadhramaut. Starting in the latter part of August and continuing into September, Kuwait deepwater ships are floated from the beaches, where they have rested for several months during the summer, making ready for the run to Basra to pick up dates. The farther the home port is from Basra, the earlier the ships must depart, so that craft from the Hadhramaut must allow a month or more to get to Basra, riding up to the Gulf of Oman on the summer monsoon and then working their way up the Persian Gulf, where the monsoon is not felt.

Almost without exception the date cargo is carried out of Basra on consignment for some merchant; sometimes the destination is known on leaving Basra, but often the consignment is sent to Aden or Mukalla (see Plate 23—bottom) in South Arabia for final shipping instructions from the Arab or Indian export firm shipping the dates. Dates are usually not carried into the Red Sea much past Hodeida in the Yemen in Kuwait ships, although Villiers[34] tells of a Kuwait *bhum* transporting a load of dates as far as Qizan in Saudi Arabia.

In such a manner dates have been leaving Iraq for decades bound for the southern shores—that is until the winter of 1949. In that winter, for the first time in many years, the great date-bearing Kuwait *bhum* fleet failed to appear in its usual strength in the waters along the southern shores of Arabia; only a portion of the usual quota appeared in Aden by the first of 1950. The dates that would ordinarily have come into Aden in Kuwait dhows came down unceremoniously under steam. What caused this abrupt change in the well-established status quo of the dhow trade? The same thing that has wrought so many other radical changes in the economy of the Middle East lately—oil!

Kuwait is actually a city-state with few industries except pearling, fishing, and shipbuilding; there are no farms, no date plantations, and only

[34] A. Villiers, *SS*, p. 366.

361 a few scattered Bedouin tribes. The Kuwait Oil Company is now operat-
465 ing in high gear, and has apparently offered so many opportunities for natives that *nakhodas* (captains) have difficulty in getting men to sail their ships at the wages they can offer. Sailors never get any regular wages on a dhow, receiving a share of the earnings of the ship only after the voyage is over. Many sailors have apparently found that it is a comfortable feeling to receive a regular wage every week! It is too early yet to tell whether or not the change is permanent.

#39 There has also been a noticeable fall-off in date-bearing Arab dhows
505 sailing to India, but apparently for a different reason. Vaidya[10] states that during the 1943-1944 season, presumably for the first time, sixty to seventy per cent of the Arab fleet that usually brought dates failed to appear because of Arab restrictions on the export of wet dates and because of the high prevailing prices of the dates. Thus, this case is not allied to the present situation prevailing in Kuwait, as during the 1943-1944 season dates presumably were not shipped to India by any other means.

However, even if Kuwait is unable to put its *bhums* to sea, the date crop in the future will still probably be carried out of the Persian Gulf in dhows as usual; it will take time to attain a balance again. Whether the port of Sur rises to the challenge or whether some Persian port takes the trade remains to be seen. The Suris from Oman are logical successors to Kuwait, for in times past they have been noted for taking cargoes at lower rates than the Kuwaiti or any other mariners could afford to, and they have a long maritime history.

It is interesting to note that oil activities in other areas in the Persian Gulf have drastically affected the marine activities of other coastal towns. Over ten years ago, the Saudi Arabian ports of Jubail, Qatif, and Darin used to send out over a hundred dhows yearly to join the Persian Gulf pearl fisheries. Now if they send out several dozen dhows it is news; the Arabs who used to dive for pearls now have steady jobs with the Arabian American Oil Company. The same has happened on Bahrein Island. The Bahrein *nakhodas* are no longer able to find a multitude of divers who will accept the wage the *nakhodas* are able to offer; thus the Bahrein pearl fleet is only a shadow of what it was a quarter of a century ago.

439 Most but not all Arab dhows load dates first; however, many Omani
226 dhows bring cargoes of dried fish and fish oil, for fishing is particularly good in the waters off Oman, and sharks and large tuna are caught in considerable amounts, both for home consumption and export. Sometimes, however, the Omanis may set out for Africa empty, or with only a partial

[10] K. B. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 207.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

or other dried fish, *ghee* (clarified butter), honey, tobacco, grinding stones, and straw work (fans, mats, and baskets). It must be remembered that most of the cargo moving around the Middle Eastern waters in small vessels, whether dhows or small coastal steamers, is for the native trade and is destined for native bazaars, which are noted for the cheapness and poor quality of their wares. Once the dhow is loaded it is ready for the trip down the East African coast; however, the Arabs sometimes take a month or more to collect a full cargo.

Upon the *nakhoda* of the dhow rests the responsibility of getting another cargo for continuing down the African coast once the consigned date cargo is discharged. Invariably the *nakhoda* is the nominal owner of his dhow, so he acts as his own agent. As the cargo loaded after the dates are discharged is not on consignment, its selection is a matter of the *nakhoda's* judgment, with an eye to what will sell best in the African markets. However, a cargo that must be regarded as essentially on consignment is that of passengers. On some Africa-bound dhows passengers comprise a considerable portion of the cargo. The competition for passengers is very brisk, so that there is sometimes a race among the various *nakhodas,* who hasten to neighboring ports via motor launch as soon as their ships reach South Arabia to discharge their dates.

Through the dhows there is a constant flow of Arabs from South Arabia and Oman and of Indians from India. The immigrants usually become porters, hawkers, musicians, or beggars, but if they are very industrious, they may end up owning a small shop in the *suq*. Their usual aim in migrating is to work long enough so that they can go home after they save a little money; usually they never make enough to get out. Villiers[16] states that the Italian officials in Mogadiscio checked four thousand passengers on thirty-five dhows that were in the harbor when he was there in 1939. In 1937 the fare along the Hadhramaut coast between ports was three rupees.[17] In 1939 the fare from South Arabia to any African port was only eight rupees for men and twelve for women.[18] In Aden in 1950 the fare for natives traveling as deck passengers on A. Besse and Company dhows with no accommodations was 15 rupees to Berbera, Djibouti, and other ports about 150 miles from Aden; thirty rupees to Massaua, Mukalla, and ports about 450 miles away; and one hundred rupees to Jidda, Port Sudan, or ports approximately one thousand miles from Aden. These were fixed rates on the dhows operated by Besse; other dhows that

[16] A. Villiers, 'The Arab Dhow Trade,' *Middle East Journal*, II (1948), 404.
[17] F. Stark, *A Winter in Arabia* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1940), p. 313.
[18] A. Villiers, 53, p. 78.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

were trading down the coast could easily afford to undercut these rates. 167

As was mentioned above, women are usually charged higher rates for travel on dhows; this is because they have to be segregated and usually manage to make trouble, unintentional as it may be. Villiers[19] gives a graphic description of the nuisance a group of women can cause on an Arab dhow. For centuries women have apparently been creating disturbances on Arab dhows, for Niebuhr, who traveled down the Red Sea on a dhow in 1763, relates that

> In our passage, we found ourselves in danger of a worse misfortune than shipwreck. The females, who were lodged under us, more than once suffered linen, which they were drying, to catch fire, in consequence of which the vessel must have been burnt, if we had not been alarmed by their screams. . . . Those women were indeed extremely troublesome and indiscreet.[20]

Besides the ship's cargo, every member of the crew usually lays in a 439 store of goods that he personally peddles. Each sailor is allowed a sea chest 505 (see Plate 22—bottom), which he fills with print goods, turbans, flashlights, razors, sarongs, cigarettes, and perfumes which are later diluted. The *nakhoda* usually has some rugs or carved wooden chests to peddle (see Plate 17—bottom). Virtually none of this material enters Africa legally, but is for the most part smuggled in. Most of these trivial goods are carried in by the Arabs personally. Villiers[21] relates that he saw one man wear three gowns and eight sarongs, then wrap more sarongs around his knees, and make six trips through customs a day. Sometimes they are detected and stripped, but that is part of the risk. Often the Africans come out in canoes at night and remove the goods in small quantities. Frequently Arabs travel down the African coast on dhows as professional smugglers, living only for the smuggling they can accomplish. This sort of trading has been going on for centuries, for Paris[22] related that '. . . leur navires sont de vraies caravanes dans laquelles tous les matelots ont un intérêt.'

For the Arabs and the Persians, the trip down the African coast is leisurely and slow. It is not unusual for a dhow to stay in a port for three or four weeks haggling over a cargo, only to leave without having transacted any business. There is no rush, simply because there would be a long wait for the southwest monsoon to set in and carry them back north, if

[19] Ibid., p. 78 ff.

[20] C. Niebuhr, *Travels Through Arabia* (Edinburgh: R. Morison and Son, 1792), I, 219. 113

[21] A. Villiers, *SS*, p. 143.

[22] F. E. Paris, *Essai sur la Construction Navale des Peuples Extra-Européens* (Paris, Bertrand, [1841]), p. 9. '. . . their ships are true caravans in which every sailor has an interest.'

they completed their trip down the African coast to Zanzibar too quickly.

Once the trading voyage down the African coast to Zanzibar is completed, Arab and Persian craft usually load a cargo of mangrove poles for shipment back to Arabia, unless they have the rare luck of getting cargo on northern consignment. For centuries mangrove poles from Africa have been used in the construction of houses in Arabia, where there is an extreme shortage of wood of any kind. Indian dhows never load mangrove poles since there is an abundance of wood in India. Mangrove trees are plentiful along the East African coast in swamps at certain river mouths; most poles come from the Rufiji Delta, a little south of Zanzibar, and from Lamu, north of Zanzibar. The poles are cut by the dhow crews, with the aid of Swahili cutters recruited for the purpose.

Alan Villiers[29] spent a month in the Rufiji Delta with a Kuwait crew obtaining a cargo of mangrove poles and has given us a most vivid description of pole-gathering activities. In the Rufiji Delta the mangrove trees grow in the soft, muddy delta, so that the cutters must wade in mud and water all day long. The branches are stripped with small axes and the poles loaded into small dugout canoes and brought to collection points where they are graded and stamped by government inspectors. Frequent and sometimes constant rain and savage mosquitos make a pole-gathering trip in the Rufiji Delta a suffering hell!

The Arabs have to pay the firm holding the pole-concession on the swamp for the poles, but in true Arab fashion they manage to load considerably more poles than they pay for. There is a well-organized pole-stealing racket, with everyone in on it, from the cutters to checkers and inspectors, with the exception of the head government forestry inspector. As the prevailing market price for mangrove poles in Arabia is about the same as the list price in Africa, the Arabs could not make any profit if they did not manage to load some extra poles.

In addition to mangrove poles, the Arabs may load cocoanuts, cloves, cocoanut oil, soap, or vermicelli. A private venture of the crew for the return trip from Zanzibar may be in lemons. Around Zanzibar lemons can be bought by the canoe-load for several rupees. The crew can squeeze the lemons and bottle the juice in bottles they have acquired along the way, using a pinch of salt as a preservative. The juice is sold at a nice profit in northern ports, where it is diluted for making sherbet.

In making the trip home on the southwest monsoon the Arabs waste little time, for the sooner they can get back, the more time they have for other activities before it is time to ship out again. Dhows from Oman

[29] A. Villiers, 55, pp. 257-261.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

forbidding traffic in adult women;[26] in 1948 these same two countries failed to file reports on efforts to suppress traffic in women, children, and obscene publications.[27]

Slaving is difficult to stamp out, as the African victims are led to believe that their social status will be bettered. Actually, there is some truth in this, for an African, even as a slave, has a far better life in Arabia, since the Arabs treat their slaves fairly.

British regulations at Zanzibar provide that dhows must carry crew members voluntarily signed on and not in excess of that needed to sail the ship.[28] At Mombasa, *British Regulations for Native Vessels* provides that no man may be signed on as a seaman without satisfying the officials that he has voluntarily shipped, and further that no passengers are to be shipped without the knowledge of the authorities.[29] However, Villiers[30] relates that an Omani *sambuk* intentionally ran down a fishing canoe off Africa and 'saved' two Africans to be sold later as slaves in Arabia.

In essentially the same category as the slave is any other illegal or illicit trade. During World War I gun-running was at a high, but now the trade is not very prosperous. There is considerable cargo smuggled to avoid duties; tea and other goods are run to Persia by the Arabs on the Trucial Coast of Oman—the old Pirate Coast.

The customs and immigration officials in Africa do not have much use for the Arab deepwaterman, with his Arab passengers and smuggling crew. On the other hand, the Arab takes delight in deception, and attempts to confuse the European as much as possible. No large dhow ever carries a visible name; its papers usually contain an official name, but more often the dhow is known by the name of the *nakhoda*, who is usually the nominal owner.

As soon as an Arab dhow reaches an African port, the local officials try to get a passenger and crew list; in this they never succeed, as certain of the passengers always vanish into the native anchorage as soon as the anchor is down, to return after the survey is made. This is easy, as all the native craft are herded into a separated anchorage and often new arrivals have to drive into small spaces in the middle of the anchorage.

Few carry passports or other identification, so actual identification is

[26] J. L. Carver, 'Slavery's Last Stronghold,' *United Nations World*, II, No. 5 (June, 1948), 24-27.

[27] However, in all fairness it should be pointed out that the USSR, Afghanistan, Byelorussia, Honduras, Iceland, and Norway also failed to make reports on the grounds that the problem has not arisen in their countries.

[28] A. Villiers, *SS*, p. 212.

[29] Ibid., p. 190.

[30] Ibid.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

721 Parts of this coast are as dangerous for Europeans as for Arabs, and in
619 some instances more so for Europeans. Even as late as December 1949 on the supposedly peaceful coast of the Aden Protectorate an act of violence occurred against a British-owned yacht. I talked to the survivors several months later in Mukalla. They related how the 110-foot motor launch *Anne Loretta* with an Englishman, his wife, and one Arab crewman was cruising a little offshore when she touched a sand bar. The captain went ashore to lay out a stern anchor and was seized by the Arabs of the local Ardiab tribe on the coast; then his wife and the Arab went ashore to see what had happened and were likewise seized. Several British officials to whom I talked admitted that these two English people came very close to death in the hands of these unpacified coastal inhabitants. The British explanation was that the area was between the Eastern and Western Aden Protectorates where the tribes had not been pacified, and the yacht should never have landed there.

IV

●505 Every Arab dhow of ocean-going tonnage has a captain *(nakhoda)*, a mate, three quartermasters (or helmsmen), a boatswain, and perhaps a boatswain's mate in addition to the crew. The total complement on a 100-ton ship may be from twenty to twenty-five men, while on a 200-ton ship there will be from thirty-five to forty men. The small coasters of up to 50 tons have crews up to eight or ten; there are no officials on these
[291] small craft outside of the *nakhoda*. There is no formal dress on a dhow; often it is difficult to tell the *nakhoda* from the crew, as everyone usually wears simply a loin cloth or the long Arab gown and a head cloth.

A *nakhoda* is much more than the word 'captain' implies; he acts as navigator, pilot, shipwright, sailmaker, ropemaker, agent for buying and selling cargo, agent for freight, agent for recruiting passengers, cashier, bookkeeper, judge, and arbitrator. So completely does the *nakhoda* handle the ship and the ship's affairs that the mate has little to do when the *nakhoda* is aboard. Only when the *nakhoda* leaves the ship does the mate take over; that is the mate's only excuse for existence.

505 Many of the Kuwait ships on the run to Africa carry carpenters aboard
396 —not as ship's carpenters, but for the construction of small dhows for sale in African waters. Presumably they can sell them profitably in Africa at a price cheaper than the local boatbuilders! However, a small 10-ton dhow that was built aboard the Kuwait *bhum* on which Villiers sailed down the African coast, had to be left on the beach at Zanzibar in charge of a ship's agent, because the dhow could not be sold at the price de-

manded.[48] Few dhows carry ship's carpenters; they hire a carpenter when they need one.

The actual duties of a dhow crew may often begin weeks or months before the voyage starts. If the dhow is new, the first duties of the crew are to rig the ship and make the sails (see Plate 20—top). A boatbuilder furnishes only the hull with masts and yards; fitting out the ship is considered part of the work preliminary to making the voyage, and the sailors do not actually receive money for this preliminary work, as they are paid only when the voyage is over. If they actually need it, the *nakhoda* will give the sailors cash advances; these advances are later deducted from the sailor's share of the vessel's earnings at the end of the voyage. Thus the *nakhoda* fits out his ship at no cost to himself so far as labor goes—the crew actually furnishes it for nothing! Besides this the crew does all the stevedoring on any cargo the dhow may carry, also transporting the cargo in the longboat when required (see Plate 19—bottom).

Arab dhows keep no schedule and know little routine. At sea everyone, including the *nakhoda*, usually loses track of time. Friday, the Moslem day of rest, is not observed at sea, so the sailors work the month around and days come to mean nothing; it is easier not even to try to keep track of them. The only track of time the Arabs keep is the occurrence of Ramadhan, the month when the Moslems fast during the daylight hours. The Arabs know whether Ramadhan is before them or whether it has passed; if it is ahead of them, they keep a very rough idea of how far off it is.

When there is no work, the crew sleeps in a shady spot, if one is available—on the cargo or a pad. All hands turn out day and night for any work. It is not uncommon to see a dhow-load of sleeping sailors pass in broad daylight, but they can be on their feet in a second.

Watches are informal and virtually nonexistent on a dhow. Usually the *nakhoda* keeps watch during the day and the mate or a quartermaster or a boatswain keeps watch during the night. It usually turns out that the helmsman keeps watch, as he is the only man who has to keep awake! The carpenter on a Kuwait ship stands no watches and has few other duties outside of his boatbuilding.

There is a general working period of several hours for all hands every day, usually during the morning. The most essential duty is bailing; the foul bilge water is brought up from a small bailing-well in buckets, and is either dumped into a bailing-trough to flow overboard or dumped overboard via a fireman's bucket brigade. The decks are never washed down, as the water would drain below, through the leaky decks, rather than

[48] A. Villiers, 55, p. 268.

4: Bowen C-5 . (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

overboard, and would have to be bailed out again. Other everyday duties may consist of ropemaking and sail-sewing (see Plate 20—bottom).

Before the sailing duties of the crew can be fully visualized, one must understand how a dhow is rigged. The ocean-going variety is invariably two-masted, although some of the smaller ocean-going craft, that should more properly be classed as coasters, have a single mast. Most large ocean-going dhows can raise a third mast far aft as a sort of jigger if they so desire; this mast and sail are usually borrowed from the longboat. These large dhows never carry this third mast as standard rigging; it is erected temporarily only when needed.

Usually when sailing before the wind large dhows carry only their great mainsails; there is little advantage in raising the smaller mizzen when sailing dead downwind with the mainsail up. However, when sailing downwind in a quartering wind, the mizzen is often raised in addition to the large mainsail. Many of the Indian and some Persian *baghlas* can send up a lateen topsail over the mainsail. Like the ornate carved stern of the *baghla*, which was presumably copied from European galleons, these topsails were probably also copied from the Europeans.[47] It is interesting to note that the *bhum*, which has risen to prominence as an ocean sailer in the last century, apparently never carries such a topsail.[48] The trend among the Arabs is to the least number of sails possible; the Arabs do not consider the setting of a topsail or a jiggermast and sail worth the effort, and few Arabs even carry a topsail.

When going to windward in light airs most large ocean-going dhows can set four sails: the lateen mainsail, the lateen mizzen, the lateen jigger, and a jib. The jib is rigged from the end of a light boom extended over the stemhead. With a big jib on, the jigger will help balance the canvas and ease the steering; but the Arabs still usually consider it too much trouble to set the jigger.

Thus, while some of the large ocean-going dhows have five different sails (main, mizzen, jigger, jib, and topsail) which they can set, they often carry only the mainsail. In adhering to their policy of a few big sails, rather than a number of small sails, the Arabs usually carry three different sizes of mainsails and two different sizes of mizzens. They adjust the size of the main to take care of the wind and try not to set any other sails. However, in light airs, they are often forced to set more canvas, but do it grudgingly.

The mainmast and yard on an ocean-going dhow are nothing less than

[47] R. LeB. Bowen, Jr., 'Arab Dhows of Eastern Arabia,' American Neptune, IX (1949), Plate 9.
[48] A. Villiers, 55, p. 277.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

ing the old paying-stuff with scrapers. After this is removed they immediately start to put on the new compound, a mixture of tallow and lime, in thick layers with the flat of their hands. As soon as the task is finished, the dhow is kedged into deeper water, re-rigged, and is ready to sail. If no planks have to be replaced, this operation should not consume more than two or three days. A unique though rather incredible means of cleaning the bottom of an Arab dhow is recorded by Villiers,[50] who relates that, while becalmed off Oman, the sailors on the *bhum* on which he was sailing dived overboard, and scraped the sea growth off the ship's bottom while swimming slowly from side to side! The *bhum* in this instance was drawing thirteen feet of water.

All work on a large dhow is done by brute strength, and when the crew is working, the pace is very strenuous. All hands carry out orders day and night with the same fanatic vigor—it almost seems as though their lives depended upon the particular task they were doing at the moment. The *nakhoda* plays no favorites; when the tempo becomes too fast, those too old or feeble will drop out or be given a sea burial in a cover of palm fronds. Thus it is easy to understand why, when there is no work, all hands are to be found asleep. Thus have the dhows sailed for centuries on their unhurried voyages, and so they will probably continue for centuries. Of all the crews—Arab, Persian, and Indian—the Arabs from Kuwait attack their work with the most energy, almost fanatically.

At times the large deepwater dhows still have a pomp and ceremony about them that give them a dash of color never to be found in coastal dhows. Whenever coming into a large port that can supply the Arab sailor with the diverse entertainment that sailors of all lands expect after a long voyage, there is a great celebration. This consists of the dance so familiar among male Arabs throughout the Arab world—dull shuffling, agitating, jumping and hopping, accompanied by the loud noise of snapping fingers and moaning music from drums and tambourines. Sometimes the sailors get so wrapped-up in their dancing while entering a port that they are late in executing orders. Quite naturally, the longer a dhow has been at sea and the farther it is from its home port, the greater the celebration.

V

On even the largest Arab deepwatermen, the crew has no quarters, as there is no 'below'; all hands live on deck, finding the softest place they can. Usually the sailor's clothes—a nightshirt-like gown or a sarong and

[50] A. Villiers, *SS*, p. 298.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arab MK2

clean-cut in Villiers' case, as all the shares of the *nakhoda* and the mate come from the crew's half of the net earnings. On the 240-ton *sambuk El Wafi*, which I boarded in Aden in 1950, the shares were as follows:[88]

	Value of Share	*Number of Shares*	*Total Shares*
Nakhoda (captain)	4	1	4
Serang (mate)	2	1	2
Sukkani (quartermaster or helmsman)	1½	3	4½
Muqaddam (boatswain)	1¼	1	1¼
Katib (clerk)	1½	1	1½
Wakil (steward)	1¼	1	1¼
Bakri or *mallah* (sailors)	1	33	33
Total shares			47½

In India some crews are paid on a salary basis, but many others work on a share basis. However, in India the owner takes one-third of whatever the ship earns. Then the craft's expenses while she was at sea and the supplies for the crew are deducted from the remaining two-thirds; the remainder is then divided among the captain and crew according to shares.[89] By dividing the profits in this manner the Indian owner gets about a quarter less than the Arab, while the Indian crew gets about ten per cent more.

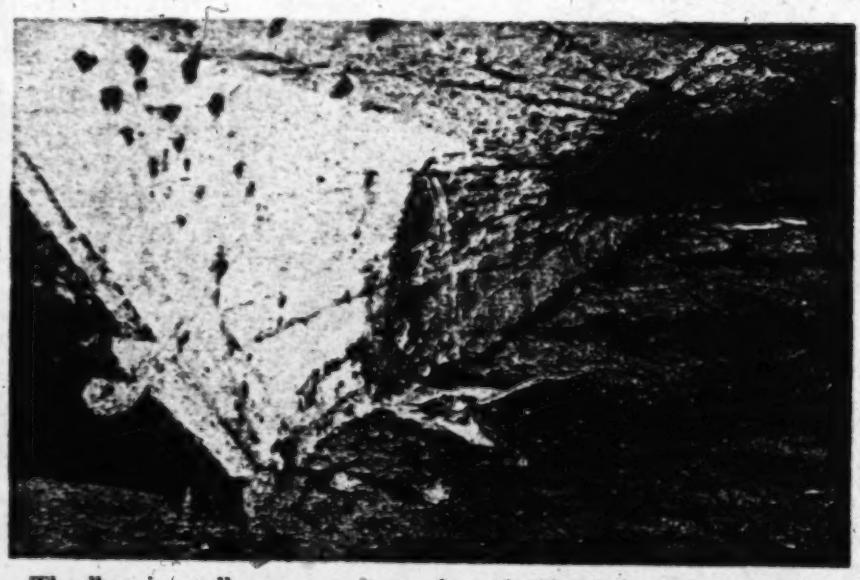
The largest importer and exporter in Aden, and probably the whole Gulf of Aden for that matter, is A. Besse and Company, operated by a shrewd Frenchman, Mr. Antone Besse. Among Besse's various holdings in the Middle East are twelve dhows, all registered in Aden. The *El Wafi* was one of the twelve *sambuks* owned by A. Besse, and operated in the Gulf of Aden and the lower Red Sea. On the average these dhows made four trips a month. The *nakhoda* was given advances, which he in turn gave to the crew, before each trip. After four trips the gross return for

[88] It will be noted that the Arabic names in Villiers' list of the members of the crew on a Kuwait *bhuss* and in my list of the members of the crew of an Aden *sambuk* are not the same; however, this does not mean that either is necessarily wrong. The Arabic names on my list were checked from three independent sources in Aden, and my informants in Aden recognized Villiers' *mucallim* as the word the Kuwaiti used for 'mate.' Villiers indicated on his list 'quartermaster' but did not give the Arabic for the word. The Arabic word that I found in use in Aden for this member of the crew was *sukkani*, which comes from *sukkan*, the Arabic for 'rudder.' Thus it would seem that the more proper translation of the word is 'rudder-man' or 'helmsman,' although his position on the dhow is really that of 'quartermaster.' The word *muqaddam* is the word commonly used on land to refer to a 'headman' who is the leader of any other group of working-men. However, on a dhow the *muqaddam* is the man who superintends the letting go and the weighing of the anchor, so the translation of the word when applied to seafaring men is properly 'boatswain.' The important fact evident from the two lists is that there is always a consistency in the top officers of a dhow—there are a captain, a mate, three quartermasters (or helmsmen), and a boatswain, irrespective of the Arabic name by which they are known.

[89] K. B. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 41.

PLATE 1

501



The dhow is usually not a very seaworthy craft. The photograph shows bilge water leaking through weak seams in the bottom of a large dhow drawn up on the beach

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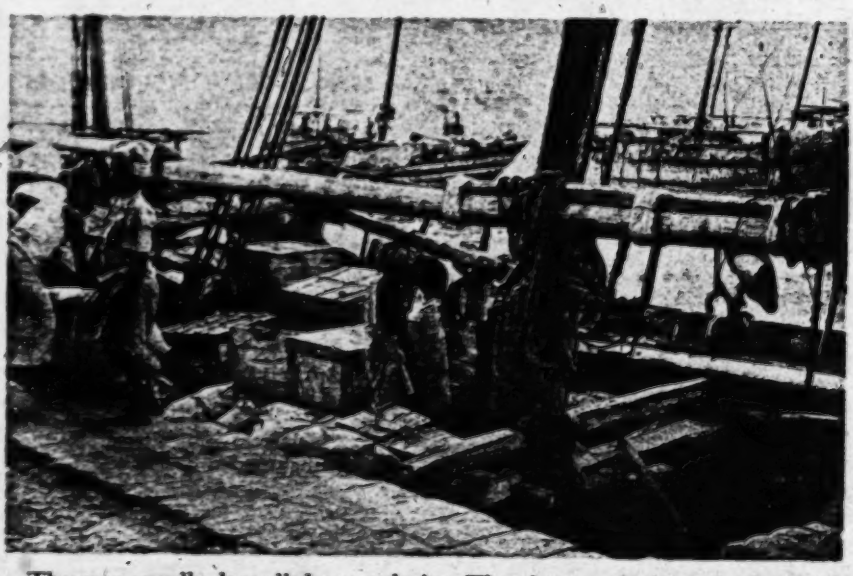

The crew usually does all the stevedoring. The photograph shows the crew of an Aden dhow loading the undecked craft for a trip to Djibouti. The cargo remains unprotected from the weather

Facing P. 196(A)

PLATE 20

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The crew that is to sail a new dhow must rig the ship and make the sails first. The photograph shows a set of sails being made at Aden

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Rope making is one of the odd jobs that crew members perform. Here an old sailor makes some rope using his toes as well as his hands

Facing P.196 (B)

4: Sowm C-8 (1969) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

the cargo the dhow had hauled was figured and the cost of the food consumed by the officers and crew was deducted, giving the net earning of the dhow. One-half belonged to the crew and was divided into forty-seven and one-half shares as shown above. The other half belonged to the owner, and represented his return on his investment; the owner had to maintain the dhows from his half of the earnings. As we saw above in the case of the figures presented by Villiers, the owner has little to deduct from his share of the ship's earnings, so his return on his investment is considerable. It is little wonder that Mr. A. Besse was recently able to give Oxford University a contribution of £2,000,000!

Over one hundred years ago, the French Admiral F. E. Paris spent considerable time in the waters around Muscat and wondered how Arab ships could at that time compete with the more efficient European sailing ships. Paris summed up his conclusions as follows:

> ... les Arabs qui les montent habitués au retour périodique des moussons, n'exécutent, en general, qu'un voyage par an ... [ils] entendent bien le commerce; malgré cela, ils sont rarement employés par les Europeans ... et, comme ils ne prennent que de très-faibles cargaisons, ce n'est que grâce à l'extrême économie des Arabs qu'ils peuvent servir pour le commerce.[45]

Only a decade ago, one hundred years after Paris, men of other lands were still wondering how an Arab sailing fleet could possibly survive in the present era of oil and steam; to satisfy his curiosity Alan Villiers dedicated a year of his life to sailing with the Arabs in their dhows. Villiers has summed up the reasons for the survival of the dhow fleet as follows:

> One reason—perhaps the chief—why the ancient trade with the monsoons down the Indian Ocean not only survives but flourishes is that the dhows warehouse the goods they carry as well as transport them, and it suits the merchants better to have 10,000 packages of new season's dates divided among a fleet of dhows, than in the hold of one steamer which will unload the lot in a day or two, and flood the market. Ten thousand packages provide cargoes for at least five large dhows; the dhow master does not care how long he takes to discharge his cargo, for his overheads are trifling, his crew works on shares and handles all cargo, and his vessel pays practically no port dues.[46]

While in Aden in 1950, the writer investigated the intriguing problem of dhow economics, as applied to the coastal craft operating around

[45] F. E. Paris, *Essai sur la Construction Navale des Peuples Extra-Européens* (Paris, Bertrand, [1841]), p. 9. "... the Arabs who man them, accustomed to the periodic reversal of the monsoons, carry out, in general only one voyage a year ... they understand commerce well; in spite of that, they are rarely employed by Europeans ... and, as they carry only very poor cargoes, it is only because of the extreme economy of the Arabs that they can be of use for commerce."

[46] A. Villiers, 'The Arab Dhow Trade,' *Middle East Journal*, II (1948), 400-401.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

●505 Aden. The twelve dhows mentioned above and owned by Besse have a gross tonnage ranging from 53 to 446, with an average gross tonnage of 181 and an average capacity of 150 tons. Six of the larger dhows have auxiliary diesel engines but the other six have none. Although engines might seem to conflict with the fatalistic attitude of the Arab sailor, the Arabs manage their engines very well. A summary which Mr. A. Besse furnished the author of the gross and cargo tonnage of his twelve dhows, all of the *sambuk* class, follows:[68]

Name	*Gross Tonnage*	*Capacity-Tons*
*Dawood**	446	400
*Galood**	330	300
*Wafi**	240	190
*Lateef**	225	200
Nufeed	189	180
Masheet	170	140
*Essid**	136	90
Nuthel	118	95
*Henkkles**	112	70
Kaid	75	70
Karn	73	70
Dharif	53	50
Average	181	150

* Indicates auxiliary diesel engine installed.

A. Besse sends these dhows to Mukalla (see Plate 23—bottom) and Shihr on the Hadhramaut coast; to Hodeida, Luhaiya, and Maidi in Yemen; to Qizan in Saudi Arabia; to Kamaran Island; to Massaua and Assab in Eritrea; to Djibouti in French Somaliland; to Zeila and Berbera in British Somaliland; and to Bender Cassim in Italian Somaliland. The most distant of these ports (Massaua) is about 450 miles away from Aden, while the nearest (Djibouti) is only 150 miles from Aden. The dhows operating in this 450-mile range from Aden average about four trips a month, and carry merchandise destined mainly for branches of the Besse empire, but also carry any other cargo they can obtain.

The Besse dhows have been known to make occasional trips as far away as Port Sudan and Jidda in the Red Sea (about 800 miles from Aden) and

[68] While the two sets of figures are not consistent in relation to each other, they do give an excellent general picture of the relative tonnages. In Besse's office on the Maala waterfront in Aden there was a large blackboard with the dhow names painted down the left-hand side and space to the right for information about their cargoes, port of destination, ETA's, etc. In the middle of the dhow list, a name had been scratched from the list. This represented a 150-ton dhow that had gone down in the Gulf of Aden in a storm; it had sailed out of Aden and has never been seen or heard from since. The dhow manager explained that the dhow had not been made in Aden, but in Africa, and was very weak; as an actual fact the other dhows belonging to A. Besse have a reputation for being the strongest-built dhows in the local waters.

Mogadiscio in Italian Somaliland (over 1,200 miles from Aden); to various Indian ports, which are between 2,000 miles (Karachi) and 2,500 miles (Bombay) from Aden, Besse's dhows have been known to have made an occasional trip.

The point of all this is that Besse has found it profitable to operate his dhows within a 450-mile radius of Aden, but no farther (see Figure 4).

Fig. 4. Map of the southern Red Sea-Gulf of Aden area

The same is true of dhows from other ports in the area, for one finds Aden full of dhows from the same ports to which Besse sends his dhows, but few from ports farther away. Thus it seems that dhows can operate economically to and from Aden within a 450-mile radius. However, more cargo goes out of Aden by dhow than comes in by dhow, and many of the dhows from Yemen and the Somalilands come to Aden empty in the chance of picking up cargoes (see Plate 23—top). It should also be noted that most of Besse's dhows return to Aden empty after delivering their cargo in the 450-mile radius. The above does not apply to the deepwater ships coasting down from Arabia to Africa, as these ships make only one trip a year. The above case for Aden applies only to coasters which make a number of trips a year, always returning to their home port (in Aden or the 450-mile radius).

Vaidya[44] has estimated that in 1944 there were about 5,300 sailing

[44] K. B. Vaidya, op. cit., p. 17.

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craft on the west coast of India engaged in coastal trade over the one thousand-mile coastline. These vessels averaged only about forty tons and carried on the average eight-man crews. It is extremely interesting to note that Vaidya[88] concluded that these vessels never made voyages to ports over four hundred to five hundred miles away, always staying within a five hundred-mile radius of their home ports. The only vessels that made longer trips were the larger craft from the Gulf of Cutch and the Sind coast, these craft carrying Indian trade to Africa, Arabia, and the Persian Gulf. Thus in India the same economic balance that is found in the Gulf of Aden governs the coastal trade. These coastal craft would rather return home in ballast than travel out of their arbitrary 'zone' for a cargo.

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Admiral Paris thought that the dhows could exist in the face of more efficient European sailing ships only because of the extreme economy of the Arabs. Villiers thought that the main reason the deepwater dhow could still exist in large numbers in the present day of steam was in the main because of the date-storehousing ability of the dhow, which did not tend to flood the market with dates. However, as we have seen above, the 1949 crop of dates entered Aden under steam, rather than on Kuwait dhows.

No, the answer to the question is of a more fundamental nature than either Paris' or Villiers' reason. It is this writer's opinion that the main and only reason why deepwater dhows can survive in this day and age is the system of sailors' wages—the 'debt system.' The Arab capitalists' philosophy is 'Get a man in debt and then never pay him enough to get out of debt.' Certainly this is true about the deepwater Arab craft that sail from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to Africa; the crews are paid once a year, so that by the time they do receive their pay the advances made to them usually consume most of their wage. This would tend to be less true if the sailors were paid more frequently. It is interesting to note that A. Besse operates his coastal dhows under the debt system and shares, paying off only once a month and giving out liberal advances in between to keep the sailors in debt.

However, this is not the most important factor keeping the large number of coastal craft operating in areas like the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the west coast of India. These coastal craft provide a very valuable service by moving cargo in small amounts to ports not usually visited by steamers; steamers find it uneconomical to make short hauls of small cargoes. However, what may be considered a small cargo for a steamer may fill several dhows. In many instances these coastal craft furnish the only transportation to many small off-the-beat ports.

[88] Ibid., p. 103.

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

craft furnish the only transportation to many small off-the-track ports. In addition to this it must be remembered that the dhow (or other native coastal craft) can navigate shallow harbors and creeks, while a steamer could not get closer than several miles. Thus there will always be a place for these short range coasters. However, the future of the deepwater dhow is another question.

The debt system has worked for centuries to the economic advantage of those financing the dhows, and to the economic disadvantage of those working on them. It has been impossible for the sailors to break away, as they can never work for another *nakhoda* when in debt to one. There is only one way to break away, and that is to pay the debt. Becoming a farmer or a fisherman does not help, as they usually operate under the debt system also.

On its face in such a financial set-up the merchant has everything to gain and absolutely nothing to lose. In the case above (where the shares, and thus the sailors' wage, were worth about 150 rupees and the merchant made eighteen per cent on his investment on the dhow), if the dhow had made only one-half of what it had, the merchant would still have received about ten per cent on his investment, but the poor sailors would have received only 75 rupees ($22.50) as a year's wage. Thus the dhow can compete against steam only at a sacrifice of the unfortunate economic slaves sailing the dhow. The dhow sailors do all the stevedoring, maintenance work, and sailing for their lowly share of the dhow's earnings; if the sailors received a decent wage (even if only on Eastern standards), the deepwater dhow could not stay afloat as a cargo vessel. Coastal craft operating short distances do pay higher wages on the average than the deepwatermen.

However, the advent of the large oil companies in the Middle East has provided a means wherein the sailors can escape from the bonds of economic slavery. By making jobs which pay good money (on Eastern standards) dhow sailors are able to free themselves of their debts and become free men. We have seen above that the oil companies in Saudi Arabia and on Bahrein Island have decreased the number of boats the pearl fisheries can send out, as they cannot get divers to work for the wage they can offer. Kuwait has long been able to keep a large deepwater cargo fleet of *bhums* on the waters around the Indian Ocean because Kuwait had a surplus of cheap labor—there was little else to do in Kuwait besides work in marine activities. Now that the Kuwait Oil Company has made jobs available to the local Arabs, the cheap labor market is gone for the Kuwait *nakhodas*. Thus as the standard of living is increased and cheap labor

4: Bowen C-5 (1950) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

becomes no longer available, the deepwater dhow is doomed. The dhow cannot operate in competition with steam if it has to pay the sailors respectable wages; that is, as long as the merchants demand one-half of the dhow earnings.

While traffic in human cargo is virtually a thing of the past, the dhows that coast along the Arabian, African, and Indian shores still have slave crews on them. Although not owned bodily, the crews are bound economically to their masters, the *nakhodas*, while the *nakhodas* themselves are economic slaves of the merchants. But, while the crews get little actual compensation when the pay-off finally comes, they are happy and well-fed and have known nothing else. Allah is compassionate, and there is always a Paradise waiting for their poor souls!

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bahrain mz2
Maritime Arabs MK2

B
871 time and then break up and disappear. Few care whether
185 they live or die. One of the Bahrein sheikhs made a visit
658 to England at the invitation of the British Government about three years ago. On his return he collected nearly a hundred thousand dollars for the founding of a free public school. A large building was projected, but by inefficiency and carelessness, if not worse, the entire sum was spent on the first story of that building. Now the project languishes and seems about to die, purely because nobody cares whether it lives or not. Even Koran schools are few in number and poor in quality. There is nothing like the diffusion of education that prevails in the inland
M desert towns.

463 Although the vast majority of the people in these towns
226 are pearl divers, there are a few fishermen and a smaller number who gain a precarious livelihood as sailors in Arab sailing ships. There are abundant supplies of fish in all these harbors, but fishing is a very unpopular occupation. It is hard, disagreeable work, and the men must frequently be out in the little boats all night. When times are good and the captain's allowances liberal, nobody is willing to fish. When the pearl catch is bad or the price low every one feels poor, many eke out their small resources by this additional work, and fish becomes plentiful and cheap.
M

505 There were once many sea-going sail boats engaged in carrying various cargoes from port to port in this district, for the Arabs are bold navigators and can travel in these ships from India to the Suez Canal. They still bring goods from the various East African ports to Arabia, and rarely fail to make these long trips successfully, but the work is hard, and since the steamers of the "Ingleez" have absorbed more and more of the better

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs Nk2

trade, the profits of a sailing boat have diminished and the percentage of the population that supports itself this way is very small.

However, since all the food and clothing of the community must be imported, and in places even the water and building material, trade in the Persian Gulf reaches large proportions. Rice is imported by hundreds of thousands of sacks each year. A special steamer of the Standard Oil Company brings kerosene oil from New York. There is a large importation of the stronger and cheaper grades of foreign cloth. The rice and kerosene and the various imports from India, such as dishes and lanterns and all sorts of gaudy trinkets, are brought in steamers. The British India Steamship Company has a line of coasting steamers which call every week at the larger Gulf ports. Some food materials are brought from Mesopotamia and from Persia, and these smaller importations from near-by ports are often brought in sail boats. All of these imports are paid for indirectly with pearls. The last season before the Great War the value of the pearls marketed in Bahrein was estimated at three *crores* or about $9,000,000.

There are no merchants in the whole peninsula that are so rich as the pearl merchants of the East Coast. There are a few of these merchants that could rank as millionaires if their fortunes were measured in American money. These men are more or less educated and have traveled extensively. Many of them take newspapers and read modern books. Their establishments are places of great luxury and comfort, with many of the outward signs of modern civilization. Their houses and offices may be lit by electric lights, and their taste extends even to motor launches and automobiles. The larger ports of